

Guidance notes on learning lessons from complaints

Complaints can be an excellent source of information and learning about how Waverley's performance is perceived by our customers. Complaints can also help us to see how our performance can be improved. When things go wrong, not only do we need to put matters right but we need to learn from our mistakes to make sure that the same problem does not happen again in the future.

It is important to ensure that action taken as a result of lessons learned from a complaint, including any changes to our procedures, is communicated to all those staff whose work may be affected.

There will also be occasions when lessons learned have implications for, and are of interest to other service areas. It is therefore important that all learning as a result of complaints is shared as widely as possible amongst all staff, both front line staff and service managers.

It is for these reasons that the Lotus Notes Complaints database requires those dealing with complaints to record the outcome of each complaint, any lessons learned and the action taken as a result of those lessons learned.

The following paragraphs give some guidance on how to complete each section on the outcome screen of the complaint record on the database.

Outcome: The drop down menu in this field gives three options – upheld, partly upheld and not upheld. A complaint is upheld if the complainant's view of the matter being complained about is found to be correct. A complaint should not be upheld if it is found that the Council acted correctly in its dealings with the complainant. A complaint should be partly upheld where the main aspect of the complaint is not upheld but there were some failings in the way in which the Council handled some associated issues.

Outcome details: This section should give a brief summary of the outcome of the complaint, ie what problems were identified, the explanation given to the complainant and any undertaking on action by the Council to put matters right.

Lessons learned: If lessons have been learned, these need to be summarised briefly. Avoid making general comments eg 'maybe we should listen more to our customers'. Be specific about the lessons learned, eg state whether these apply to one member of staff or a team, a shortfall in procedures, the need to improve information provided to customers or any other aspect of service delivery.

Action taken: Action taken should relate directly to the lessons learned from a complaint. Details should be provided on the date the action was taken, by whom the action was taken and the purpose. There should also be a date on which the matter will be reviewed to check whether the action taken has been effective.

When completing each section on the outcome screen it is important to bear in mind that a summary of this information will be reported to Members. It is therefore important to avoid the use of jargon or technical terms that may not be easily understood.